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ABSTRACT

A comprehensive evaluation process begins with school board policy. Policy should provide direction by addressing the issues of who and what are to be evaluated, why evaluation is needed, when and by whom the evaluation is to be completed, and how the information is to be reported. An evaluation system, regardless of who is evaluated, should focus on growth. The instrument and data gathering method should be chosen according to the type of information desired and the specific school in question. If evaluation is to provide for growth, it must be approached positively and allow feedback from the individuals being evaluated and recommendations by the board. Sound evaluation is based on job description. School board functions to be evaluated include planning and policy, legislation, judicial responsibilities, and appraisal and evaluation. The superintendent, as the chief executive officer of the board, should be directly involved in each of the four areas and make recommendations that the board can accept, reject, or modify. The superintendent evaluation process should be constructive, ongoing, and focused on improving performance. Appendices provide examples of superintendent's evaluation guidelines, superintendent's job description, and an instrument used to evaluate the superintendent's performance in a Nevada school district. (MLH)

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DEVELOPING POLICY ON EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT OF SCHOOL BOARD AND SUPERINTENDENT PERFORMANCE

Presented at

NCPEA

August 1989

by

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Developing Policy on Evaluation and Assessment of School Board and Superintendent Performance

Introduction

The last two decades have brought a proliferation of accountability legislation. The states of Colorado, Idaho and California, among other, held elections on tax reductions. The passage of this legislation prompted many other states to either reduce taxes or curtail spending. However, accountability legislation is not limited to financial matters. For example, several states have mandated school districts to plan, evaluate and report curricular objectives in cooperation with community members.

Although the focal point of accountability legislation varies greatly from state to state, each mandate operates on the assumption that school districts must justify their actions to the taxpayer. Inherent in any concept of accountability is a systematic process of evaluation to determine if specific educational objectives are being met. Since boards of education are legally responsible for governing the school district, the impetus for initiating the evaluation process originates with board policy.

Policy Development

School boards are constantly faced with making decisions that affect the district. Many of these decisions are routine in

nature, while others require a great deal of consideration and research. Since time is a previous commodity, the development of sound policy not only expedites decision-making but is also an essential ingredient in resolving many crucial issues.

Lack of policy often leads to disagreement among board members as to how a similar decision was made at a previous session. Lack of clarity raises questions concerning the original intent of the policy. Instead of codifying policies under a single cover, many boards must review minutes of previous meetings to find the regulation appropriate to the issue at hand. To the chagrin of many, time has been wasted and often the policy is never found.

The purpose of written school board policies is to provide direction for the operation of the district. It is through these policies that administrative functions are delegated to the superintendent. Policy should provide the basis for authority while also identifying the procedure to be followed in executing the board's wishes.

The development of school board policy is no easy task. Aside from the fact that policy must be clear and concise, it should reflect the board's position based on local expectations. It must agree with the law. If, for example, the law requires that superintendents be evaluated once a year and be provided with written evaluations, then the policy should reflect these statutory provisions. It may also be wise to quote the section

of the law or at least identify the statute that provides authority for the specific policy.

In the absence of statutory guidance, school boards may have greater latitude in developing a course of action. Policies should, however, provide a sense of fair-play and reflect a sincere desire to improve the educational process within the school system. For instance, even though the law may be general and nondescriptive, a policy on evaluation may include criteria and procedures for formal evaluation. In developing an evaluation policy, answers to the following questions may provide guidance as to what should or should not be included in such a policy statement.

1. Why is evaluation needed? Although many reasons exist for supporting evaluation, professional education associations agree that the primary purpose of evaluation is to improve instruction. In order to accomplish this objective, the evaluation process should promote open communication between the evaluator and the person being evaluated. The process should identify strengths and weaknesses while providing a prescription to improve job performance.

The hidden agenda often becomes one of using evaluation as a tool to justify either the continuance or termination of employment with little or no consideration given to improvement. Philosophically, this attitude is not only contrary to providing the best teaching-learning environment but also creates an

atmosphere of fear and distrust. Here, the employee is preoccupied with "hiding weaknesses" in order to keep the job rather than improving skills. Lack of feedback erroneously gives the impression that job performance is satisfactory and that weaknesses either have not been identified or do not exist.

2. Who is to be evaluated? Traditionally, policy has emphasized teacher evaluation with little or no mention given to other employees. At the same time, every board member recognizes the contributions that each staff member makes to the school district. If the board believes that increased efficiency begins with a comprehensive analysis of performance, then policy should specify those jobs that are to be evaluated. A policy statement may stipulate that the superintendent, central office administrators, principals, and non-certified personnel must also be evaluated.

3. What is to be evaluated? Evaluation should be based on job performance. In order to make the evaluation process more meaningful, the job description for a specific position should be reviewed. If none exists, one should be developed. Once the components of a job are in place, a decision has to be made as to whether all aspects or one specific component are to be evaluated. The instrument and process are then designed to accommodate this decision. It may be helpful to first evaluate total job performance rather than focus on specific areas of concern.

4. Who is going to do the evaluation? Many alternatives exist as to who will conduct the evaluation and where the data will originate. Self-evaluation may be one viable component of the total process. Although the most common practice seems to be that of superiors evaluating subordinates, there may be some merit in obtaining data from subordinates on job performance of superiors. Peer evaluation has also been used in many situations. It is also conceivable that input be gathered from a sample of patrons if the job requires community contact. Since there are many alternatives, the board must decide whether to place major emphasis on one type of evaluation or gather information using many sources. Board policy should reflect this decision.

5. How often will the evaluation occur? Evaluation of personnel is not only a time consuming task but also requires a high level of expertise. As a result, many principals concentrate their time and effort on teachers who obviously need help. Those experienced or tenured teachers who seem to be doing a satisfactory job are often ignored.

School boards have a similar problem. Because of a lack of time and knowledge, they often rely on gut instinct rather than hard data in assessing performance of the administrative staff. However, increased pressure stimulated by the national reports and taxpayer revolts have forced boards to reconsider past practices concerning evaluation. If boards are truly committed

to improving instruction they must recognize that evaluation is an ongoing process. Each subsequent evaluation builds on the previous one with the result being improved performance. In order to encourage improvement, it may be wise to stipulate in policy that, as a minimum, a superintendent should be evaluated annually and the performance of every teacher be assessed twice each year.

6. What is going to be done with the data? The purpose of gathering information on job performance is to provide a basis upon which improvement can be made. Appropriately used, this information communicated in an open and honest manner coupled with a prescription for growth should greatly enhance the quality of job performance.

Inherent in this question are concerns about record keeping and the collection, analysis, and reporting of data. School boards should be cautioned that when developing policy, these concerns should be addressed in light of state statutes that govern use of any access to employees' records and the reporting of evaluation results at open school board meetings.

Ownership seems to play a major part in the success of an evaluation program. In addition, policy development can be made easier and more workable by using guidelines from professional associations. A policy on evaluation, for example, may involve

teachers who are aware of both the day-to-day problems confronting the school and the guidelines that are promoted by their association.

It is a good idea to have policies reviewed periodically--perhaps once a year or every two years. Although involvement from teachers, parents, and students is often solicited, it should be understood and made clear that the function of advisory groups is to provide input. The acceptance of a policy is a board responsibility that cannot be delegated to others.

Once policy is in place, it is the responsibility of the administrative staff to carry out this policy. An important point to remember is that school boards are policy-making groups, not administrators even though their roles often become confused in many school districts. In order to help clarify responsibilities, many school districts have incorporated administrative regulations into policy manuals. These regulations are expanded policy statements that usually provide administrators with options and procedures used in running the school on a daily basis.

Board policy also has a direct relationship to rules and regulations. The broad, general statements made in board policy are translated into specific rules, usually in the form of teacher manuals and student handbooks, that are expected to be followed. These manuals are an extended form of policy that clarify expectations in the teaching-learning process.

Little doubt exists that a comprehensive set of board policies is a necessary ingredient in an efficiently run school district. Policies not only expedite decision making at both the board and administrative levels but also inform the educational community of board expectations. Although the development of policy is an onerous task, it is a necessary one.

Evaluation of the School Board

As previously noted, sound evaluation is based upon job description. The evaluation of a board is no exception. The National School Board Association categorizes the many functions of a board into four broad areas. The first, planning and policy making, involves tasks such as goal development and the formulation of board policy. The second, legislation, is defined as a process to put plans and policies into action. The judicial function is the third broad area of school board responsibility. Here emphasis is placed on the resolution of conflicts through administrative hearings and other mechanisms in the decision-making process. The fourth area is appraisal and evaluation which focuses on the process of reviewing the operation of the school and determining if the job is being done. It should be noted that the superintendent, as the chief executive officer of the board, should be directly involved in each of the four areas. The superintendent's role is one of making recommendations which the board can accept, reject or modify.

The gathering of data to determine board effectiveness can be accomplished through open discussion among board members; questioning each board member individually; or observation of a board meeting through the use of video tape or a consultant. Although the possibilities for data gathering are unlimited, the most common technique seems to be through the use of the written questionnaire. The questions used will be dependent on the type of information desired. For example, the following statement requires only a yes or no response:

_____ 1. School board discussion is related to agenda items.

This same question can be asked using a Likert scale which allows for greater variance in response. In the question below, a continuum is provided with 5 being always true to 1 which is never true:

1. School board discussion is related to agenda items. 5 4 3 2 1

A third example presented below not only allows for individual choice but also provides information on the collective responses of board members:

	Individual's Choice	Board's Choice
1. School board discussion is related to agenda items.	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1

These are but a few of the many ways in which questions can be written to gather data. The most important consideration is to design an instrument that gathers information appropriate for

your board. A questionnaire that works well for one board may be inappropriate or even disastrous for another board.

Evaluation of the Superintendent

The assessment of the superintendent's performance is based on the same principles underlying any sound evaluation system. The evaluation should be constructive in nature and conducted for the purpose of improving performance. The system should also be ongoing and identify both strengths and weaknesses documented by sufficient data. Information obtained from the evaluation process should be communicated to the superintendent through oral and written reports. If need be, prescriptive remedies may be provided to facilitate improvement.

Although many models of evaluation systems exist, most generally contain at least three distinct phases. The first phase includes the pre-evaluation conference. Here, the board and superintendent define job responsibilities and expectations. The type of instrumentation, process, analysis and reporting of data are agreed upon. In the second phase, the actual evaluation process, data is collected and analyzed. The information is usually gathered in narrative or objective form. The type of instrument used should be dependent on the specific situation in question. The final phase consists of the post-evaluation conference. In this phase the board has interpreted the data collected from the evaluation and reports this information to the superintendent. The discussion should be open and allow for

feedback. It should be kept in mind that this conference is constructive in nature and for the purpose of improving the chief executive's leadership skills. In order to provide for growth, both the superintendent's strengths and weaknesses should be discussed and recommendations for improvement be provided by the board.

The appendices provide samples of policy, job description and an instrument used to evaluate the superintendent's performance in Churchill County School District, Nevada. In reviewing these materials, it should be noted that a consistency exists between the policy, the job description and the instrumentation.

Summary

A comprehensive process of evaluation begins with school board policy. Policy should provide direction by addressing the issues of who and what are to be evaluated; when the evaluation is to be completed; and how the information is to be reported. A sound evaluation system, regardless of who is to be evaluated, should focus on growth. The instrument and method used to gather data should be chosen on the basis of the type of information desired and the specific school in question. If evaluation is to provide for growth, it must be approached in a positive manner allowing for both feedback from the individuals being evaluated and recommendations by the board.

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A variety of materials on evaluation can be obtained from NSBA and AASA.

The materials found in the appendices were supplied by:

The Research and Educational Planning Center
College of Education
University of Nevada-Reno

Primary authors are Dr. Dan Cline, Dr. david Holman, Dr. Deborah Loesch-Griffin, A. Cavanaugh and B. Porter.

APPENDIX A

Policy Statement

EVALUATION OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

The board shall evaluate and assess in writing the performance of superintendent at least once a year during the term of a contractual agreement.

The evaluation and assessment shall be reasonably related to the position description of the superintendent and the goals and objectives of the district for the year in question.

The board shall adopt an evaluation format within 150 days of the effective date of a contractual agreement.

At least once each fiscal year, the district and superintendent shall meet in closed executive session (unless specifically prohibited by state law) for the purpose of mutual evaluation of the performance of district and superintendent.

In the event that the board determines that the performance of the superintendent is unsatisfactory in any respect, it shall describe in writing, in reasonable detail, specific instances of unsatisfactory performances.

The evaluation shall include recommendations as to areas of improvement in all instances where the board deems performance to be unsatisfactory.

The superintendent shall have the right to make a written reaction or response to the evaluation. This response shall become a permanent attachment to the superintendent's personnel file.

Within thirty days of the delivery of the written evaluation to the superintendent, the board shall meet with the superintendent to discuss the evlauation.

APPENDIX B

Superintendent's Job Description

JOB DESCRIPTION
SUPERINTENDENT OF CHURCHILL COUNTY

TITLE: Superintendent of Schools
Churchill County School District

QUALIFICATIONS: Degree(s), experience, certification, and such other qualifications that may be required.

REPORTS TO: Board of Education

JOB GOALS: Statement of the broad thrust of the position

PERFORMANCE RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Serves as the executive officer of the Board of Education and be charged with the responsibility for implementing the policies of the Board.
2. The superintendent shall prepare the agenda for each meeting, shall attend all meetings, and participate in all deliberations of the Board.
3. Administer the schools in conformity with the adopted policies of the board and in accordance with state law.
4. Develop administrative principles and procedures for implementing board policies.
5. Keep the Board fully and regularly informed as to the effectiveness of newly adopted and existing policies.
6. Make all discretionary decisions according to Board policy as they are needed for the good operation of the school district.
7. The superintendent is responsible for preparing and submitting to the Board recommendations relative to all matters requiring Board action, placing before the Board such necessary and helpful facts, information and reports as are needed to insure the making of informed decisions.
8. Assist the Board in all matters pertaining to the general welfare of the school district and perform other duties as the board may determine.
9. Responsible for a program of public information so that the community may be kept informed of significant educational developments.
10. Make recommendations for acquisition of building sites and the buildings to be constructed there on.
11. Responsible for the business management of the school district including preparation and implementation of the annual budget.
12. Responsible for the overall operation and maintenance of all school properties.

13. Responsible for short and long-range, strategic planning to maximize the utilization of the district's resources.

14. Recommend employees for appointment, promotion or dismissal in accordance with the policies of the Board.

15. Responsible for the assignment of all instructional and non-instructional personnel.

16. Responsible for general personnel management.

17. Responsible for implementing an efficient personnel evaluation system.

18. Responsible for developing and implementing a direct two-way communication system with staff.

19. Plans, develops, and revises personnel management policies in accordance with state legislation for submission to the Board for adoption, and maintains personnel policy handbooks.

20. Responsible for appraisal and evaluation of the instructional program in terms of the district's goals and objectives.

21. Responsible for establishing provisions for inservice or professional development of staff.

22. Responsible for the evaluation of curricula on a periodic basis.

23. Responsible for formulating and recommending all major instructional program changes to the Board for consideration.

24. Must take an active leadership role in the development and improvement of the program of instruction.

25. Must keep professionally current and informed of modern educational philosophies and practices and keeps the board informed of current educational trends.

26. Responsible for delegating authority and responsibilities effectively.

27. Must provide for the systematic evaluation of all principals, other administrators and non-teaching professionals by appropriate professionals.

28. Must actively participate in professional organizations with the express purpose of better serving the district and public education.

29. Reports periodically to the Board the needs and status of student service programs.

TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT: Statement of conditions of employment

EVALUATION: Statement of conditions of evaluation

APPROVED BY: (SUPERINTENDENT) DATE

REVIEWED AND AGREED UPON BY: (BOARD OF EDUCATION) DATE

APPENDIX C

Instrument

4/11/89

BOARD EVALUATION OF THE CHURCHILL COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT

Each member of the board should anonymously complete this evaluation instrument based on what he or she believes best represents the performance of the superintendent on each item. You are asked to circle the appropriate number on the five point scale for each item, one (1) is low and five (5) is high, or circle "N" to indicate "no basis" for opinion, if it is an item of which you have little or no knowledge. Any item you score below a three (3) must be commented upon. From this information, a composite evaluation can be developed for the board. The results of this evaluation can then be used to establish annual goals for the superintendent. All responses are confidential and individual responses will be grouped with other responses for purposes of presentation to the Churchill County School Board.

SUPERINTENDENT/BOARD RELATIONS

The Superintendent...	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree		No Basis
1. ... facilitates the training and orientation of board members.	1	2	3	4	5	N
2. ... seeks board input into policy implementation and executive decision making.	1	2	3	4	5	N
3. ... keeps the board informed of district developments.	1	2	3	4	5	N
4. ... implements board action according to board expectations.	1	2	3	4	5	N
5. ... provides the board with background information on crucial issues requiring board action.	1	2	3	4	5	N
6. ... prepares reports for the board that are sufficiently comprehensive and detailed.	1	2	3	4	5	N
7. ... makes presentations to the board that are clear and nonambiguous.	1	2	3	4	5	N
8. ... seeks to point out lawful and educationally sound principles to guide board decision making.	1	2	3	4	5	N
9. ... is responsive to the requests of the board.	1	2	3	4	5	N
10. ... fosters a climate of trust and mutual respect between the board and superintendent.	1	2	3	4	5	N

Please comment on any of the items on the preceding page; indicate the item number(s) upon which you are commenting.

_____

_____

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SUPERINTENDENT/COMMUNITY RELATIONS

The Superintendent...	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree		No Basis
11. ... has regular procedure for conveying information to the community.	1	2	3	4	5	N
12. ... communicates the educational goals and policies of the district to the community.	1	2	3	4	5	N
13. ... participates in appropriate community functions.	1	2	3	4	5	N
14. ... is cooperative with the media.	1	2	3	4	5	N
15. ... maintains an appropriate level of public interaction through the media.	1	2	3	4	5	N
16. ... clearly and effectively explains educational programs to the community.	1	2	3	4	5	N

Please comment on any of the above items in this section; indicate the item number(s) upon which you are commenting.

_____

_____

_____

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PERSONNEL RELATIONS

The Superintendent...	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree		No Basis
17. ... oversees the recruitment and employment of highly qualified staff.	1	2	3	4	5	N
18. ... manifests behaviors which indicate a high value on cooperation with the educational staff in planning and decision making.	1	2	3	4	5	N
19. ... recognizes professional achievement of the staff.	1	2	3	4	5	N
20. ... promotes and supports the professional growth of the staff.	1	2	3	4	5	N
21. ... has the ability to manage unique or crisis situations in dealing with personnel.	1	2	3	4	5	N
22. ... sees that an effective personnel evaluation system is maintained.	1	2	3	4	5	N
23. ...makes duty assignments which seem to reflect appropriate considerations of unique talents and qualifications of the best available personnel.	1	2	3	4	5	N
24. ... initiates and promotes a workable chain of communication between the employees and the superintendent.	1	2	3	4	5	N
25. ... fosters a climate of trust and mutual respect between the administration and staff.	1	2	3	4	5	N

Please comment on any of the above items in this section; indicate the item number(s) upon which you are commenting.

FACILITIES MANAGEMENT

The Superintendent...	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree	No Basis
26. ... oversees the assessment of short and long-range facility needs for future district growth and development.	1	2	3	4	5	N
27. ... consults with appropriate staff on facility needs.	1	2	3	4	5	N
28. ... has been instrumental in developing plans to modify, renovate or accommodate expansion when faced with the challenge of growth or change.	1	2	3	4	5	N
29. ... adheres to district policy on the utilization of district facilities.	1	2	3	4	5	N
30. ... insures that building security and safety is of primary importance in our district.	1	2	3	4	5	N
31. ... insures that district classrooms are adequately equipped.	1	2	3	4	5	N
32. ... maintains an adequate program of building maintenance and upkeep.	1	2	3	4	5	N

Please comment on any of the above items in this section; indicate the item number(s) upon which you are commenting.

BUSINESS/FISCAL MANAGEMENT

The Superintendent...	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree		No Basis
33. ... systematically gathers information to determine the current and future educational needs of the district.	1	2	3	4	5	N
34. ... is able to adequately determine the financial needs of the district.	1	2	3	4	5	N
35. ... is able to adequately solve financial problems related to district expenditures as they occur.	1	2	3	4	5	N
36. ... is efficient in the utilization of financial resources.	1	2	3	4	5	N
37. ... is effective in procuring equipment, materials and supplies for district use.	1	2	3	4	5	N
38. ... has a clear process for the development of the district's budget.	1	2	3	4	5	N
39. ... accurately reports the current financial status of the district.	1	2	3	4	5	N
40. ... has established procedures which prevent over-expenditures.	1	2	3	4	5	N
41. ... demonstrates concern for cost-effectiveness in conducting district business.	1	2	3	4	5	N

Please comment on any of the above items in this section; indicate the item number(s) upon which you are commenting.

PERSONAL QUALITIES

The Superintendent...	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree		No Basis
42. ... displays initiative and self-motivation when conducting district business.	1	2	3	4	5	N
43. ... keeps informed of current trends to facilitate good district management.	1	2	3	4	5	N
44. ... keeps his leadership skills current through regular professional development.	1	2	3	4	5	N
45. ... appropriately delegates authority.	1	2	3	4	5	N
46. ... conducts himself in a manner which indicates dedication to promoting educational excellence.	1	2	3	4	5	N
47. ... communicates a direction for the future of the district.	1	2	3	4	5	N
48. ... can be characterized as a flexible, diplomatic leader.	1	2	3	4	5	N
49. ... is active in professional organizations.	1	2	3	4	5	N
50. ... demonstrates skill in managing the broad range of educational problems and issues confronting the superintendency.	1	2	3	4	5	N
51. ... shows an interest in the welfare of employees.	1	2	3	4	5	N
52. ... demonstrates an ability to manage crisis in emergency situations.	1	2	3	4	5	N

Please comment on any of the above items in this section; indicate the item number(s) upon which you are commenting.

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CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT

The Superintendent...	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree		No Basis
53. ... is informed of current trends and developments in curriculum and instruction.	1	2	3	4	5	N
54. ... is responsive to the district's needs for instructional support services (supplies, media and library resources).	1	2	3	4	5	N
55. ... is active in seeing that the curriculum is clearly related to district goals and expectations.	1	2	3	4	5	N
56. ... places appropriate emphasis on the needs of special populations by providing adequate programs for the handicapped, disadvantaged and gifted.	1	2	3	4	5	N
57. ... sees that the resources from state and federal sources are effectively used in this district.	1	2	3	4	5	N
58. ... provides direction in instructional supervision.	1	2	3	4	5	N
59. ... exhibits initiative in the instructional planning of the district's programs.	1	2	3	4	5	N
60. ... monitors the effectiveness of the instructional programs.	1	2	3	4	5	N
61. ... sees that instructional and curricular evaluation methods are appropriate to the intended outcomes.	1	2	3	4	5	N
62. ...sees that instructional and curricular evaluation data are used for instructional improvement.	1	2	3	4	5	N

Please comment on any of the above items in this section; indicate the item number(s) upon which you are commenting.

_____

_____

_____

_____

STUDENT SERVICES

The Superintendent...	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree		No Basis
63. ... acts as a liaison with community agencies concerned with student services.	1	2	3	4	5	N
64. ... adequately monitors enrollment, attendance, behavior and discipline policies and procedures.	1	2	3	4	5	N
65. ... places the security and safety of our students at the forefront.	1	2	3	4	5	N
66. ... demonstrates that comprehensive student services are a continuing high priority.	1	2	3	4	5	N
67. ... demonstrates concerns for due process and other rights of students.	1	2	3	4	5	N
68. ... keeps the board informed of district needs related to student services.	1	2	3	4	5	N

Please comment on any of the above items in this section; indicate the item number(s) upon which you are commenting.

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

The Superintendent...	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree		No Basis
69. ... has seen to it that a comprehensive planning program emphasizing short and long-range plans has been implemented by the district and is monitored on a current basis.	1	2	3	4	5	N
70. ... oversees an adequate accountability procedure for district operations.	1	2	3	4	5	N
71. ... sees that adequate information is gathered when formulating district plans.	1	2	3	4	5	N
72. ... consistently monitors evaluation procedures to measure the effectiveness of the school district.	1	2	3	4	5	N

Please comment on any of the above items in this section; indicate the item number(s) upon which you are commenting.